

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT
DIV of USSN 09/485,320

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1-14. (Cancelled)

Claim 15. (Currently Amended) A composition comprising equol which is obtained by causing a strain of a live microorganism capable of metabolizing daidzein to equol to act upon a daidzein-containing substance, wherein said strain is selected from the group consisting of Bacteroides E-23-15, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6435, Streptococcus E-23-17, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6436, and Streptococcus A6G-225, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6437.

Claims 16-17. (Cancelled).

Claim 18. (Currently Amended) The composition according to Claim 15, which further contains at least one component that favors the maintenance and growth of the strain ~~of microorganism capable of metabolizing daidzein to equol.~~

Claim 19. (Currently Amended) The composition according to Claim 15, wherein the component that favors the maintenance and growth of the strain ~~of microorganism capable of metabolizing daidzein to equol~~ is at least one substance selected from the group consisting of galactosylsucrose, soybean-oligosaccharide, lactulose, lactitol and fructo-oligosaccharide.

Claim 20. (Currently Amended) The composition according to Claim 15, wherein said daidzein-containing substance further contains at least one member selected from the group consisting of genistein, daidzin and genistin.

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Claim 21. (Currently Amended) The composition according to Claim 15, wherein the daidzein-containing substance is soya isoflavone.

Claim 22. (Cancelled).

Claim 23. (Currently Amended) The composition according to Claim ~~22~~, which 15, wherein said composition is in a food ~~form~~ composition.

Claim 24. (Currently Amended) The composition according to Claim 23, wherein the food ~~form~~ composition is selected from the group consisting of a drinks, dairy products, and fermented milk, ~~bars, granules, powders, capsules and tablets~~.

Claim 25. (Currently Amended) The composition according to Claim ~~22-15~~, which is in a pharmaceutical dosage form.

Claim 26. (Currently Amended) The composition according to Claim 25, wherein the pharmaceutical dosage form is selected from the group consisting of aqueous solutions, emulsions, granules, powders, capsules and tablets.

Claims 27-28. (Cancelled).

Claim 29. (Currently Amended) A method of producing equol which comprises causing a strain of a live microorganism capable of metabolizing daidzein to equol to act upon daidzein, wherein said strain is selected from the group consisting of Bacteroides E-23-15, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6435, Streptococcus E-23-17, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6436, and Streptococcus A6G-225, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6437.

Claims 30-31. (Cancelled).

Claim 32. (Currently Amended) A live strain of microorganism selected from the group consisting of Bacteroides E-23-15, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6435, Streptococcus E-23-17, which has been deposited as FERM BP-

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6436, and *Streptococcus* A6G-225, which has been deposited as FERM BP-6437.